

you're still here to haunt me (you ain't gone) by jakepurralta

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Summary:

The town moves on and so does Jonathan. But Nancy won't let him pull away from her that easily, and so she sets out to keep him in her life, while carefully trying to keep a complicated mess of feelings at bay.

Chapter five: She knows what she has to do.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Jonathan and Nancy completely took me by surprise. Granted, the entire show did, I never expected to love it so much. I had to write a little something. Please forgive me for any spelling/grammar errors you might find as English is not my first language. I learn as I go.

Anyway. I'm so sorry about this story. I have no plan for it, whatsoever. I literally just wrote this because I want this tag to fill up with content as soon as possible.

"Thanks Mrs. Wheeler."

A familiar voice pulls Nancy from her train of thought, and without question she finds herself pulling open her door and half-tumbling towards the stairs, where she can find Jonathan, Will and her mother looking up at her in confusion. Nancy Wheeler isn't really known to be the awkwardly stumbling kind of girl so her loud thumping through the hallway is raising some eyebrows.

"Sorry," she huffs, leaning against the railing as she attempts to regain her breath. It takes her a good ten seconds before she can continue. "Jonathan, hi! Haven't seen you around in a while."

"Uh, yeah." He responds, offering her a sheepish wave of the hand. Off to the side, Karen notes that the two might prefer to talk more privately, so she tells Jonathan that she'll be escorting Will to the car while they catch up. It does seem to loosen him up a little, and he takes a somewhat tentative step forward as Nancy approaches him.

"How...how are you enjoying your new camera?"

"It's good. It's great, actually. I can't really go a day without taking pictures, so I'm glad I get to do it again."

Nancy nods silently, still feeling a pang of guilt for what Steve had done to the original model. While Jonathan still can't seem to look Steve in the eye without doing some kind of jaw clench that neither of them talk about, he keeps insisting that he doesn't blame Nancy for what had happened, and also that he feels sorry for invading her privacy in the first place. Whenever anyone brings up the subject, it always leads to a back and forth of apologies, so they've both simply decided to just keep it unspoken and leave it for what it is.

"I don't see you as much anymore." Nancy notes coolly. Or, at least she thinks she sounds like that. She hopes that he didn't hear the slight crack in her voice as she said it. She doesn't even understand it herself. "I've missed you." The words seem to hang at the edge of her lips, but thankfully she refrains from saying them out loud. No need to further the complications of whatever it is that she's feeling whenever she's near him lately.

"Yeah, I've been kind of busy. With...rebuilding the house, looking after my mom and Will. They've been through a lot, so I just try to make things easier on them. Whatever I was working on before," he presses his lips together and gestures around with his hand. "all this, it can wait."

"I've missed you," along with a mess of other words, want to get out, want to tell him everything that's on her mind. But it's not the right time. At least she thinks it isn't.

It's definitely not the right time, right? Jonathan is in a really unstable head space right now, putting the needs of his family way above his own and trying to improve their lives all the while ignoring, pushing back, everything that *he* went through in the past few months. The last thing she wants to do is add more weight to the incredible burden he must be feeling. So she won't tell him that she misses him when he's gone, she won't praise him for how selfless he's being for taking such great care of his family, she won't express her worries for him when she sees him at school avoiding her, with his shoulders slouched and his eyes dark. She will definitely not tell him that she misses him in her bed.

(Plus, she and Steve are on the right track of working things out. She doesn't have any right to miss Jonathan in her bed.)

"Good," is the only thing she can absentmindedly say to him when she notices that he's giving her an odd look. She must've spaced out for a while. "that's good. Your family is really strong. But, let me know if you need anything. I'll help with anything you need."

"Thank you, Nancy." There's a hint of a smile playing around the corner of his lips, and it almost looks like he was about to add something to that sentence. But he presses his mouth shut and turns his head to the door to look through the window at Will and Karen. The moment is gone.

Satisfied to see Will excitedly chatting up Karen, he turns back to Nancy. "So, how have you been? With all the, um..." The words die on his tongue and he awkwardly gestures upstairs, in the direction of her room.

The nightmares.

She doesn't want to tell him that she still has nightmares about the beast.

So it's not exactly a lie when she tells him that she can sleep at night. She can. Mostly.

She just...figures out a way to deal with it whenever she's dealing with another restless night. Sometimes, she gets out of bed and starts writing a letter to Barb. She'll never read it, of course, but it helps a little. Barbara was the most supportive and loyal friend Nancy had ever had, so surely she would've known just the right thing to say or do to get her friend back to sleep.

But some nights, writing a letter to a friend that's not around anymore just won't cut it. She'll feel the need for something – someone – tangible, someone to hold, someone to hold her, or maybe not even hold. Just someone to have around, calm breaths and beating hearts to count as she tries to lull herself to sleep. Someone who can lie next to her and serve as a reminder that they're still alive, that she's still here, that their lives have been messed up but somehow she's still kicking.

Whenever she feels like that, her mind pulls her back to that night

with Jonathan. The night she felt so...terrified and powerless and yet at the same time, she'd never felt so safe before.

But logic trumps heart, so she always ends up calling Steve.

He'll lie in her bed, arm slung across her body and she'll be staring in the opposite direction, thinking about what it'd feel like if it were Jonathan.

"Okay, well, I should go." Jonathan says, his voice ever so soft. "I promised my mom that I'd bring Will home for dinner on time."

"Okay." Nancy repeats, putting the friendliest smile she can muster on her face. "Don't be a stranger." He's taking steps backwards towards the door, reaching for the handle, clearly unsure of what to do. She can't blame him. He's never been much of a social butterfly and even with her 'expertise', she doesn't know what she wants to do either. A handshake is *way* too formal, especially considering everything they've been through to get here. Then there's the option of a hug, but she doesn't know how he feels about *that*. They've never hugged. She kissed him on the cheek once, but it was *Christmas*.

By this time he has already opened the door and Jonathan gives her a single, shy nod before turning on his heel and walking over to his little brother.

So. Incredibly. Confusing.

2. Chapter 2

She starts seeing him less and less at school.

At first, she didn't even have to try looking for him. She had spent enough time with him to know that he was the kind of kid that sat at the very edge of the school cafeteria eating lunch alone, or who spent his free time wandering around school property looking for pictures to take.

Nowadays, though, even when she tries her best, she can't seem to find him as often as she used to. Sometimes she even tries to casually mention him to Steve, who just shrugs and tells her exactly what she keeps telling herself, "I haven't seen him."

A few weeks pass and she gets a little sick of it. She had tried calling him once, but he didn't pick up or even call her back. It's so unlike him.

Tap, tap, tap.

That's why she's standing on his doorstep right now and she can't deny the fact that she's feeling a little aggravated.

After she knocks for a fifth time, she hears incoherent mumbling on the other side, some locks being shoved, then the door opens and she's looking at Joyce Byers, who is looking a little frazzled by the looks of her hair, but otherwise she seems to be feeling as fine as she can be. Having Will return home has obviously pulled her back from constantly tip toeing on the edge of madness, and Nancy hopes that she (and her whole family) will recover soon.

"Hey, Nancy." Joyce utters. She sounds a bit surprised, but delighted at Nancy's presence nonetheless.

"Hello, Ms. Byers. I've actually been looking for Jonathan. Is he here? I don't think he was at school today." The words tumble from her mouth, and she can't help but rub her hand over her arm in an attempt to calm her increasing nerves. She has an unexplained, almost magnetic pull towards him that she wants to satisfy. She

really wants to see him, but the prospect of being in close proximity of him again makes her feel a little anxious.

"No, sorry." There's a peculiar tone in Joyce's voice that Nancy can't quite put her finger on, but she doesn't feel like trying to decode that. It sounds too much like that one time the lady at the precinct thought Jonathan was her boyfriend. "I know he's been skipping classes lately, I know it's bad, but-

"-but all you care about is getting better. As a family. I understand. Of course I do."

Joyce's face softens at that. "Why don't you try calling him?"

"I have, actually. He doesn't answer my calls." Upon seeing Joyce's disapproving frown, Nancy quickly adds, "That's not fair. I meant to say 'call'. I've tried calling him once. Not several times. I don't- I don't know why I said that. Well, he's not here, so I'm gonna go. I'll make sure to try and *call* him soon." She knows she's blabbering, and she knows that Joyce (being a mother and all) is going to try and figure out what this all means, so she begins to literally back away from a conversation that had taken a turn for the incredibly *awkward*.

But before Nancy gets a chance to leave, she hears Joyce calling out from behind her.

"I think he misses you, too."

That catches her off guard. She turns back around. "What?"

"He misses you, too." Joyce repeats matter-of-factly, stepping forward to decrease the space in between them. "He just needs a little push. If you want him to stay in contact with you, you need to let him know. Sometimes, these things need to be spelled out for him. I don't know when this all started." Joyce sighs a little and averts her gaze, a sadness flickering across her face. "He doesn't always seem to understand that people *actually* want him around. So he pushes them away. Maybe so that he won't get hurt, I'm not sure. All I know for sure is that there seems to be a change in his posture and his tone of voice whenever he talks about you. It's good. You've definitely been a good influence on him."

"Really?" A blush starts to creep on her cheeks. It's a lot to take in.

But everything Joyce is saying, it makes sense to her. She doesn't like it, though. If there's even the slightest possibility that Jonathan might think that she doesn't want him in her life, she wants to do everything in her power to let him know that he is wrong. She doesn't want him to push her away. In a weird way, he might think he'll be doing her a favor, but he'll be wrong.

She wants him to stay.

And Joyce's words give her newfound determination to let him know just how she's feeling.

3. Chapter 3

Jonathan ends up going an entire week without speaking to her.

She wants to give him space, she really does. Even though she misses him, she does think that maybe she can note a slight look of accomplishment on Jonathan's face when she spots him in the school hallway a few days after he and Joyce had finished repainting the house. He looks exhausted, but content.

But when she goes home that night and closes her eyes, she sees the monster again and reaches out for her phone. The last person that she had called was Steve.

Steve, who tries so hard to prove to her that he's working to become a better man, and granted, it's showing. But she's never really able to shut up the tiny voice in the back of her head that whispers in her ear that he's not the kind of man she wants to be with, and that there's a high probability that he never will be.

Without giving it much thought, her fingers are dialing Jonathan's number and she's not even given the opportunity to back out because he picks up on the second ring.

"Hello?" His voice on the other side of the line sounds raspy and laden with sleep, which causes her to realize that this is quite an *ungodly* hour to make a phone call.

"It's 2 AM, which I now realize is a terrible time to call someone. I'm so sorry, I'll--"

"Nancy?" Even though he still sounds tired, she can't help but hear how his voice seems to perk up and judging by the sounds he's making in the background, he's sitting himself up in bed. "Is everything alright?"

She can't help but feel heartened upon hearing the concerned tone of his voice, despite the current time of day. "Uh, please don't feel obligated to *anything*, but...can you come over? I know I'm asking a lot of you, but I can't even close my eyes without seeing it and I just--"

She knows she's rambling and her voice is brittle, but they just keep spilling out and he doesn't make any sort of attempt to stop her. She briefly wonders if he's even listening.

But of course he listened. He always does.

His voice is calm and reassuring, and he waits an appropriate amount of time for her to finish her sentence. "I'll be right there."

She waits for exactly twelve minutes before she hears a gentle knock on her window, loud enough for only her to hear. She whips around in her chair, for some reason a little worried that it might be Steve (who still makes a habit out of surprising her at the most inconvenient times), but she sees Jonathan instead with his unkempt hair but comforting exterior, and it puts her mind at ease.

She opens her window to let him in, but they first share a look that lasts a good five seconds before she steps back and he steps over the edge, displaying a total lack of finesse in the process. He just barely manages to stop himself from literally stumbling into her room. She can't help but chuckle at the sight.

He laughs it off with her and takes some time to regain his composure, a look of seriousness coming back to him as he studies her face.

"Do you want to talk about it?" He asks softly.

She shakes her head. "Not really. I guess I'm just tired."

He nods in understanding and looks off to the side, where he had placed a sleeping bag the first time he'd been in her room. But she hadn't bothered to take out the sleeping bag this time, he notices, and so he looks to the bed and back to her with an uncertain look in his eyes.

"I hope you don't mind. I was thinking we could..."

She doesn't finish her sentence, but he gets it. "Oh! No, I don't mind. If you don't."

"I don't."

"Okay."

She moves over to her side of the bed, the right side. His side is the left side. They've never really talked about it, but that's where he slept the last time and it just feels right that way. She knows he's watching her as she slips under the covers and pulls the sheets over her body.

He springs into action when she looks at him expectantly. He kicks off his shoes, shrugs off his jacket and places it over her desk chair and tip toes to the left side of the bed where he lays himself down next to her, over the covers.

"Aren't you going to be cold?"

"I just- I thought that it would be a good boundary. You with the sheets. I'll be here."

She waves it off. "There's no need for that. Get up." She nudges him off the bed and he complies easily, so she can yank the sheets down.

It comes as a surprise to him when immediately after that, she grabs his wrist and pulls him right back on the bed. He clumsily ends up half-crashing into her, the bed creaking loudly in protest, and them snickering through the silence.

In a way, he does feel a little closer to her when they're sharing the sheets, but it's not like that bothers Nancy. At all. In fact, having his body so close to her makes her think that she can actually have a good night's rest. She turns the lights off but doesn't fall asleep right away, and he must not be tired either because after a minute of silence, he asks, "Is this better now?"

He's obviously talking about him being with her right now. Them not talking about the monster, just lying next to each other in silence.

"Yes."

He hums in response to that, and she can feel him adjusting his body to a different position. His face towards her back, though still far

enough from her to respect her personal space.

"*Screw that*," she thinks, so she turns around to face him. Even in the dark, she can still make out the look of surprise on his face. It's kind of endearing.

It's embarrassing to ask, but she wants him to touch her. She wants him to hold her like the way he held her when he pulled her back from the Upside Down. It made her feel safe.

Her mind is desperately trying to figure out a way how a person can possibly as that *casually*, is that even possible? She doesn't want to scare him off by creepily asking him to touch her.

Fortunately, the odds seem to be in her favor because he's looking at her with a look of wonder in his eyes, like he's about to step into uncharted territory. "Nancy?" His hesitant voice is barely audible.

"Yes?"

"Can I...?"

She wonders what he's talking about, but then notices how he's slowly reaching out for her until his hand is hovering over her arm, waiting for consent. She nods, and he closes the gap between them.

His touch is soft, his fingers tracing over her arms, to her neck, until they tentatively end up on her cheek, where they stop and start to move away. He thinks it might be enough, but she's quick to grab on to his hand before he gets a chance to pull back.

They exchange another look, then Nancy turns away from him, still holding his hand. She's draping his arm over her shoulder and fitting her body into his while he's shuffling around on the bed to find a comfortable spot to lie in.

When she closes her eyes, she still sees the monster and her heart momentarily forgets to beat in fear. But then she feels his breath tickle the back of her neck, remembers that she's not alone, and finds solace in the memory of him pulling her back.

No, she definitely needs him to stay in her life.

Morning comes sooner than she expected, and when she wakes up, Jonathan is already sitting up, putting on his shoes.

After a moment, he notices that she's awake and smiles a little shyly at her. "Oh, good morning. It's early. You can go back to sleep if you want."

"No, I'm good." she replies, though the yawn that follows after that indicates otherwise. Her mind tells her that this is an oddly domestic look for them, but for some reason it doesn't feel uncomfortable and unfamiliar at all. Unlike whenever Steve spends the night, she seems to be in no rush to get Jonathan out of her room. In fact, she's not ready for him to leave at all. So she blurts out, "Do you want to stay for breakfast?"

The question surprised her as much as it surprises him, but the words are out there now, and she can't take them back. He eyes her door with a doubtful expression. "I can't just-"

"Oh, but it's fine!" Nancy sits up on the bed abruptly. "You can just hang around while I tell my mom you're coming over, and then you can knock on the door in like ten minutes. Nobody will notice a thing."

He's considering it.

"Don't tell me you don't eat breakfast." She presses on with a teasing smirk on her lips.

Any look of worry that was on his face was instantly replaced with a grin that extended to his eyes and warmed her heart. It felt good to know that she could make Jonathan Byers smile.

"Well, I could definitely eat."

4. Chapter 4

Notes for the Chapter:

Just wanted to say thanks for all the kudos! I did not expect to be surpassing 100. I definitely need to have more confidence...

It ends up being only slightly awkward, to have Jonathan at the Wheeler dinner table, without his little brother Will or anyone else to act as some sort of counter balance.

He's quiet as he calmly cuts up his pancakes into small, bite sized pieces, but polite in his responses to Karen's occasional questions. Sometimes, he'll glance up and steal a peek at Nancy through his bangs, though he's quick to avert his gaze when she looks back at him.

Nancy knows that it doesn't go unnoticed by Mike, nor her mother. *It'll be fun dealing with that later.*

This is one of the few times she's grateful to have such an unconcerned father.

"I have to say," Karen begins, as she and her daughter are drying up the dishes in the kitchen. Jonathan is long gone, Ted is off to work, Holly is sleeping and Mike has retreated to the basement, leaving Karen and Nancy alone for their inevitable boy talk. "I'm surprised to see you on such good terms with Jonathan. I thought you always thought he was a bit of a weird kid."

Nancy shrugs. "I did. But so much has happened in the past few weeks. He's actually not that bad. He's really nice."

Karen eyes Nancy carefully, not missing the way she's quickly snapping her mouth shut at the end of that sentence. "What?"

"What?" Nancy repeats, attempting to sound nonchalant.

"It kind of looked like you wanted to say something else."

Nancy grits her teeth, putting the dish towel on the sink, seemingly hesitant to open up to her mother. But if she's learned anything lately, it's that she needs to learn how to stop keeping her thoughts so hidden, especially when it comes to her family. She made a promise to Mike, to no longer keep secrets from him. Maybe she can do the same for her mother.

"Sometimes, I feel like he's purposely avoiding me. I'll see him at school, but only briefly. He'll give me a nod at the end of the hallway and then just disappear. I thought we were friends now."

Karen is silent for a while as she takes in her daughter's words. "That doesn't really surprise me, to be honest." She chooses to say, gentle with her tone of voice. Nancy gives her an odd look. "Jonathan was always a social outcast. To my knowledge, he never really had any friends. Maybe you're the first real friend he's ever had. If I were him, that would freak me out a little."

"-and then you'd start avoiding me."

"Precisely." Karen stacks some plates, places them gently in the cupboard, closes the door and then shifts her full attention to her daughter, who looks deep in thought. "If I were you, I'd definitely talk to him about this. Don't push him into anything, but maybe there are some things he hasn't told you yet."

On the other side of town, Jonathan is pushing the door open to his home and is instantly welcomed by the sound of carefree laughter- El and Will seated on the floor as he teaches her a clapping game, and Joyce is watching them from afar, a content smile on her face.

Joyce is the first to notice him, and her face lights up even more. "Hi, Jonathan!" Within a second, she's by his side as she throws her arm around him and gently squeezes a little before letting go. She's been trying really hard to be a more present parent (he tried insisting that she doesn't need to be, she's already doing so well), and Jonathan can't deny the fact that it does make him feel better...and more loved.

Her perky greeting catch the attention of El and Will, who are now

looking at the older boy with matching smiles.

Jonathan reciprocates the smile, lifts his hand and waves. Admittedly, he's never been good with new people before, but Eleven's starting to become more and more like family these days. Plus, it's *Eleven*. She's, quite special, to say the least. He could swear that he sometimes overhears his mother softly pondering to herself if she'd ever be able to afford officially adopting her.

He certainly wouldn't mind considering himself a big brother to El. (He makes a mental note to himself that he definitely needs to have a serious talk about this with his mother one of these days.)

"So, how was it at Nancy's?" Joyce asks as she pushes her son into the kitchen, sounding much like those teenagers Jonathan avoids at school who stick to their friends like glue, pushing for juicy gossip.

The thing is, Jonathan tries to be as transparent as possible regarding his whereabouts. The last thing he wants to do is put his mom back on the edge by not telling her where he is and letting her freak out for no reason. That, unfortunately, also means that she'll ask all of the questions when it's about stuff that's uncommon for him.

And boy, is sleeping over at a friend's house uncommon for Jonathan. A *female* friend, no less.

"It was fine, mom." Jonathan replies, hoping that she'll drop it. He knows she won't though, because his lips are curved up and he doesn't know how to stop it from happening.

Loud laughter erupts from behind them and temporarily distracts them, when Jonathan notices that Joyce is struggling to fight back tears through her wide smile.

His protective instincts immediately kick in and he steps forward with concern on his face, ready to offer comfort. "Mom? Are you okay?"

A tear escapes and rolls down her cheek, but she chuckles and nudges him back with a light smack on the chest. "Don't worry, Jonathan. I'm just...grateful." She sucks in a breath and takes in the sight of Eleven

and Will singing while clapping their hands together, though the singing is mostly done by Will. El is just happy to participate to the best of her ability. "I'm grateful that there's happiness in this house again, you know? Will is safe with us. The boys have a new friend." She motions at him. "*You* have a new friend."

"Yeah," Jonathan lets out a quick chuckle. "-and it's *Nancy Wheeler*, of all people."

Joyce jerks her head back at her son, her smile replaced with seriousness. "I don't think it's that weird."

He offers her a puzzled expression. "Come on, mom. *Me*. And then, *Nancy Wheeler*." He doesn't mean to sound like he's comparing her to a Goddess that ascended from the Heavens, but in a way, she kind of does deliver that sensation in him, even if it's unintended. Especially when she's looking right at him with those big doe eyes of hers.

He shoves that thought aside.

"She's just a girl, Jonathan. And you're just a boy. Sure, you have some different interests, but that doesn't make a friendship between the two of you anything to raise an eyebrow about. It all comes down to trust and mutual respect. I think it's definitely there."

And just as fast as he felt a feeling of happiness wash over him as he entered the house, he feels his brain swiftly dragging him back to familiar territory, where all he knows how to do is question people's interest in him, looking for some kind of ulterior motive. He hates himself for being like this, and he knows that it's showing on his face. The dark sadness that seeps into his eyes, telling himself to pull back as a defense mechanism.

All he wants in this moment is to just walk away, to lock himself up in his room, blast some music and either not think about it at all or completely overthink it. But he doesn't have the heart to walk away from his mother like that, so his feet remain cemented on the ground.

Being the understanding mother that she is, Joyce knows exactly what signs to look for when Jonathan is slipping back into old habits. "Promise me something."

Jonathan nods, wanting to tell her 'anything'. He'd do anything for family. For her. For Will. For Eleven, even.

"Promise me you won't push her away. You might think you're protecting yourself but you're not. Try to give her a chance to get close to you. It's for you."

That strikes a chord. Jonathan finds himself at a loss for words, throat clutching up and his heart rate accelerating. Years of feeling like this, and he still can't really tell why it always triggers such an intense response in him whenever his mother asks him to do something not for her or for Will, but for himself. The mere thought of doing so sounds unfamiliar...unnecessary.

But he finds himself nodding again, and much to his relief, Joyce seems to be satisfied with that response, giving him a sympathetic rub on the arm before retreating back to the living room.

He lets out a tired sigh.

He definitely needs some alone time now.

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

Okay, yes. I do realize that I haven't been updating in two months. Admittedly, I had no idea where to take this story after chapter four (not that I did when I posted chapter one lol) but I feel like I kind of know what to do now. Just a few hurdles to overcome before I wrap it up, so this short chapter is basically just setting up the continuation of this story. You can expect chapter six not longer after this. (In the meantime, do you still remember what happened thus far? Why not re-read? :D) Thanks for the kudos in the meantime! It means so much to me.

She knows that he needs some time alone.

Jonathan Byers, he's unlike any other boy she's had in her life. To be fair, when she started dating Steve Harrington, the only types of boys she met were just extreme versions of Steve: foul-mouthed, self-centered jerks who thrived on stepping on others who they deemed were beneath them. Sure, it was sickening to her, but at the time, that was all she knew. If boys were like that, she considered herself lucky to be with Steve, who at least seemed to have a few boundaries.

Until she got to know Jonathan.

Jonathan, he's flawed and she knows it, and she thinks that he knows this too. But what little she knows about his past, it's obvious that those experiences have shaped him into the boy he is now. He's reserved and acts fearful when in the company of strangers, but once those walls tumble down, he's respectfully honest. Like he's got no time to lie to the people he cares about.

They've never really talked about this before, but Nancy feels like she's finally entered that small cluster of 'Jonathan Byers' loved ones'. She can tell by the way his face softens when they lock eyes and by the way he's been carefully testing the waters of touching her: it

started with a somewhat intentional brush of arms, but now he's gotten to placing his hand over hers when it looks like she needs it. It's always slowly, too. Allowing her enough time to tell him no should she feel the need to.

But the thing about Jonathan is, she doesn't know what *this* is.

All she knows is that every time she watches him pull away from her like he's scared that he's either wasting her time or that she's going to end up hurting him, her heart aches and she wants to reach out to him and physically keep him with her.

Which is weird, isn't it? She has a *boyfriend*. Isn't the whole point of having a boyfriend to want to constantly be close to them? Instead, she's running out of excuses to use to skip dates with Steve so she can sit at home and wallow in self-pity, because she lost Barbara, she's losing Jonathan, and now she's losing Steve as well. It's really not fair to anyone in this situation.

She wants so badly for things to go back to the way they used to be. When Barbara was alive and well, Jonathan was nothing more to her than her annoying little brother's friend's weird older brother with whom she never interacted with using more than a polite nod of the head at an acceptable distance, and the thing she worried most about was finding the perfect sweater to wear to her date with Hawkins' local high school heartthrob, Steve Harrington.

None of that monster, PTSD and death crap.

But she has to face reality and she would be remiss to deny the fact that she feels a pull towards Jonathan that's almost gravitational.

She knows what she has to do.

Without wasting more thoughts on it, she finds herself hopping off her bed and exiting her room, offhandedly yelling something in her mother's direction about where she was headed, quick to move out the door before Karen even has a chance to stop her daughter and request for more clarity.

"I need to talk to you." She says, an approximate fifteen minutes later,

not even bothering to greet the person in front of her or waiting to catch her breath.

"O...kay."

Author's Note:

Title taken from Matthew Mayfield's "Take What I Can Get", which I first heard in this incredibly beautiful Jonathan/Nancy video. Please watch it, it's so good: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEGvHW6I3Ac>